In the claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of improving security processing in a computing network, comprising:

providing security processing in an operating system kernel;

providing an application program which makes use of the operating system kernel during execution;

executing the application program;

selectably securing at least one communication of the executing application program with a remotely executing application program using the provided security processing in the operating system kernel;

providing, in the [[secure]] security processing, support for at least one security directive; and

invoking, during execution of the provided application program, the at least one security directive, wherein selectably securing the at least one communication of the executing application program is performed in response to the invocation of the at least one security directive.

2. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, further comprising:

configuring at least one port used by the provided application program such that communications using the at least one port are to be secured; and

wherein selectably securing the at least one communication of the executing application program then secures all communications using the at least one port.

3. (Original) The method according to Claim 2, wherein the provided application program does not include code for security processing.

4. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 2, wherein configuring at least one port further comprises specifying information to be used in selectably securing the at least one communication of the executing application program.

5. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 4, wherein the specified information comprises at least one of: authentication information; cipher suites options; and security key input information.

6. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 2, wherein configuring at least one port comprises at least one of: providing port definition statements; setting environment variables; and using job control language.

7-8. (Cancelled)

9. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the at least one security directive comprises at least one of: access capability for a client certificate; access capability for a client identifier; a request to start operation of selectably securing the at least one communication of the executing application program; and a request to stop operation of selectably securing the at least one communication of the executing application program.

10. (Currently Amended) The method according to Claim [[8]] 1, wherein the at least one security directive comprises an access capability for a client certificate, and wherein invoking at least one security directive invokes the access capability, and further comprising returning the client certification from the provided security processing to the executing application program in response to the invocation.

11. (Currently Amended) The method according to Claim [[8]] 1, wherein the at least one security directive comprises an access capability for a client identification, and wherein invoking at least one security directive invokes the access capability, and further comprising returning the client identification from the provided security processing to the executing application program in response to the invocation.

12. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, further comprising:

providing, in the secure processing, support for a security directive that requests selectably securing the at least one communication of the executing application program to begin operating; and

invoking the security directive; and

wherein selectably securing the at least one communication of the executing application program then secures all communications of the executing application program.

13. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, further comprising:

providing, in the secure processing, support for a security directive that requests selectably securing the at least one communication of the executing application program to stop operating; and

invoking the security directive; and

wherein selectably securing the at least one communication of the executing application program then comprises stopping securing communications of the executing application program.

14. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 12, wherein the security directive specifies information to be used in selectably securing the at least one communication of the executing application program.

15. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 14, wherein the specified information comprises at least one of: authentication information; cipher suites options; and security key input information.

16. (Original) The method according to Claim 12, wherein a decision to invoke the security directive is made by the executing application program.

17. (Original) The method according to Claim 12, wherein a decision to invoke the security directive is made by carrying out, by the executing application program, a security negotiation protocol.

18. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the provided application program comprises security directives that invoke security processing, and further comprising:

intercepting, in the provided security processing, the security directives; and

executing, responsive to the interception, corresponding security functions.

19. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the provided application program comprises security directives that invoke security processing, and further comprising interpreting, in the provided security processing, the security directives as being non-operative.

20. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 18, wherein the provided application program may be executed on a system which does not include the provided security processing in the operating system kernel, in which case the security directives operate to perform security processing instead of selectably securing the at least one communication of the executing application program.

21. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the provided security processing operates in a Transmission Control Protocol layer of the operating system kernel.

22. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the provided security processing implements Secure Sockets Layer.

23. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the provided security processing implements Transport Layer Security.

24. (Cancelled)

25. (Currently Amended) A system for improving security processing in a computing network, comprising:

means for performing security processing in an operating system kernel including support for at least one security directive;

means for executing an application program which makes use of the operating system kernel during execution;

means for invoking, during execution of the provided application program, the at least one security directive; and

means for selectably securing at least one communication of the executing application program with a remotely executing application program using the security processing performed in the operating system kernel in response to the at least one security directive.

26. (Currently Amended) A computer program product for improving security processing in a computing network, the computer program product embodied on at least one computer-readable media and comprising:

computer-readable program code configured to perform security processing in an operating system kernel including support for at least one security directive;

computer-readable program code configured to execute an application program which makes use of the operating system kernel during execution;

computer-readable program code configured to invoke, during execution of the provided application program, the at least one security directive; and

computer-readable program code configured to selectably secure at least one communication of the executing application program with a remotely executing application program using the security processing performed in the operating system kernel in response to the at least one security directive.